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The Rise of the BRICS and the Fall of the USSA? • 25m

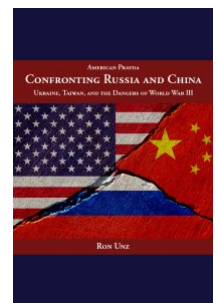
RON UNZ • SEPTEMBER 4, 2023 • 3,300 WORDS • [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)



General-Secretary Leonid Brezhnev of the USSR

For Americans such as myself who came of age during the 1970s or early 1980s, the Soviet Union always carried the whiff of a decaying ideological empire, ruled by a decrepit political leadership class that had long since lost the trust of its own people.

Such was my opinion at the time, and nothing I have learned since then has changed it. Three Soviet leaders ruled during that era—Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko—all elderly and infirm, with the reigns of the last two being so brief that our own President Ronald Reagan once quipped that they died too rapidly for him to schedule a summit. Given that the top leaders of the USSR were so obviously enfeebled, analysts recognized that they were hardly the real decision-makers of the declining Soviet colossus that they nominally controlled; instead, most power was presumably vested in the hands of shifting coalitions of their senior aides and advisors, persons often obscure to the outside world. Perhaps partly as a consequence of this severe weakness at the top, the USSR entered a period of steep social and economic decline, and within just a few more years it had disappeared from the world.



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All this was certainly true, but it is quite sobering to consult Wikipedia and discover the exact ages of those elderly Soviet leaders, who had been so widely ridiculed in the Western media as decrepit or even senile. Brezhnev[1] was 75 when he died in 1982, while Andropov[2] came to power at age 68 and died fifteen months later, replaced by his successor Chernenko[3], age 72, who only survived a year. So in today's America, all those confused, befuddled Soviet leaders whom we regarded with such scorn would be youthful political figures compared to our own President Joe Biden, currently seeking reelection at the age of 80, or his leading rival, former President Donald Trump, age 77. Medical science has obviously advanced quite a bit in the last four decades, but I think the total Western domination of the global media is a more important factor in this large difference of perceptions. Is Biden really so much sharper than Brezhnev and Chernenko, or is it simply that our media is better at hiding his inability from most of the general public?

During his entire political career, Biden had been notorious for merely reading the scripts and speeches written for him by others, and even in his 40s he sometimes seemed completely unaware[4] of the falsehoods and total absurdities he was spouting. Lately he has sometimes begun confusing our official positions[5] on crucial policy matters, requiring his aides to quickly "clarify" them. I'm sure that Brezhnev or Chernenko would have done the same if they'd been put into that position.

Although he ranked as the world's leading Communist, Brezhnev personally indulged himself by accumulating a large collection of luxury automobiles[6], including Maseratis, Rolls Royces, and Jaguars, an embarrassing story widely promoted by the powerful Western media as proof of Soviet hypocrisy. But although the direct evidence of the Hunter Biden laptop revealed that Biden and his family had taken many, many millions of dollars in secret payoffs from foreigners, our mainstream media has hidden that reality[7], so much of the public probably still remains unaware of it.

Below the General Secretary of the USSR, political authority was held by the Supreme Soviet, a parliament generally portrayed in the West as a rubber-stamp body filled with corrupt, elderly time-servers, who mostly just approved the political decisions made by the figures who quietly pulled their strings. Such harsh criticism was probably correct, but is our own Congress today so very different? At the age of 81, Sen. Mitch McConnell[8] has led the Republicans in the Senate for the last 16 years, and probably ranks as one of the two most powerful Republican leaders in America. But a few days ago, he revealed his inability to respond to a simple question due to a "brain freeze," as shown in a video clip that drew many millions of views on Twitter.



In his sneering commentary[9], Andrew Anglin noted that McConnell had grown up in modest circumstances, and then spent his entire career in politics, never earning more than \$174,000 per year; but he had nevertheless somehow managed to accumulate a personal fortune in the tens of millions of dollars[10]. The corrupt and decaying USSR had far less wealth to siphon off, but its Communist leaders similarly enjoyed lifestyles vastly superior to that of their miserable subjects.

California Sen. Dianne Feinstein has passed her 90th birthday and apparently is senile[11], yet still holds crucial positions on several important Senate committees[12]. During her long decades in office, she exercised a great deal of political influence over our foreign relations with other countries, notably including China, and during exactly those years her late husband Richard Blum became a billionaire[13] through his extremely successful investments[14] in that same country.



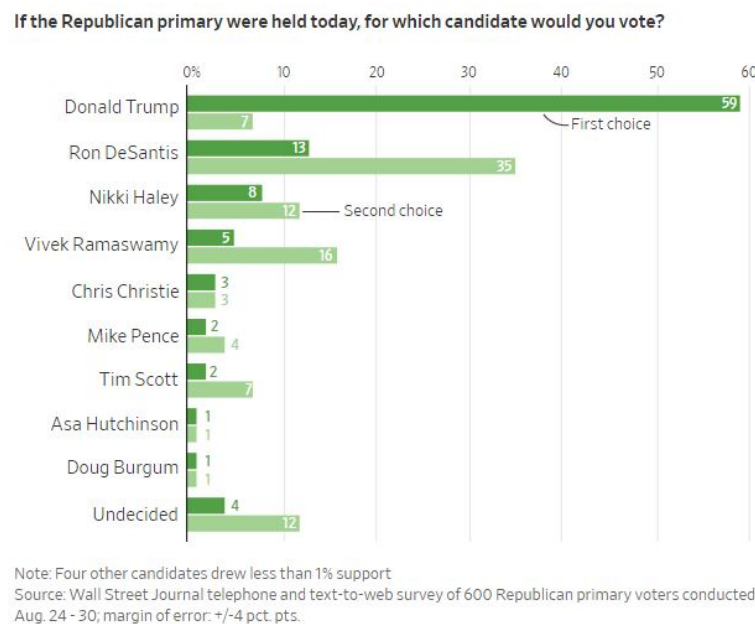
In many respects, the signs of apparent political instability in the U.S. these days seem far greater than anything that had been visible to outside observers in the USSR of the 1980s.

Just last week extremely harsh sentences were imposed upon several additional January 6th Trumpist protesters, including those whose crimes hardly seemed to exceed trespassing or petty vandalism. Joseph Biggs received 17 years in federal prison for moving a portable metal fence, while Dominic Pezzola got 10 years for breaking a window. These individuals were protesting an extremely close Presidential election that had obviously been stolen from incumbent Donald Trump[15], and their angry political demonstration took place just months after an almost unprecedented national wave of riots, arson, and looting had resulted in few if any serious prosecutions. Moreover, some have noted that these Trumpist protests at the Capitol were really not so very different in kind from those that the Democrats had earlier organized against Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court:[16] yet

celebrity Amy Schumer and her allies received media accolades rather than a decade or two in federal prison.

Commentator John Derbyshire, a conservative now in his late 70s, is normally quite restrained in his sentiments, but he described[17] these extreme sentences and other related political developments as so outrageous that the recent Republican Presidential debate seemed like something “irrelevant...the acting-out of some formal ritual that no longer has any actual significance, from which nothing of any consequence will follow.” Indeed, the title of his piece suggested that the U.S. was “moving beyond electoral solutions.”

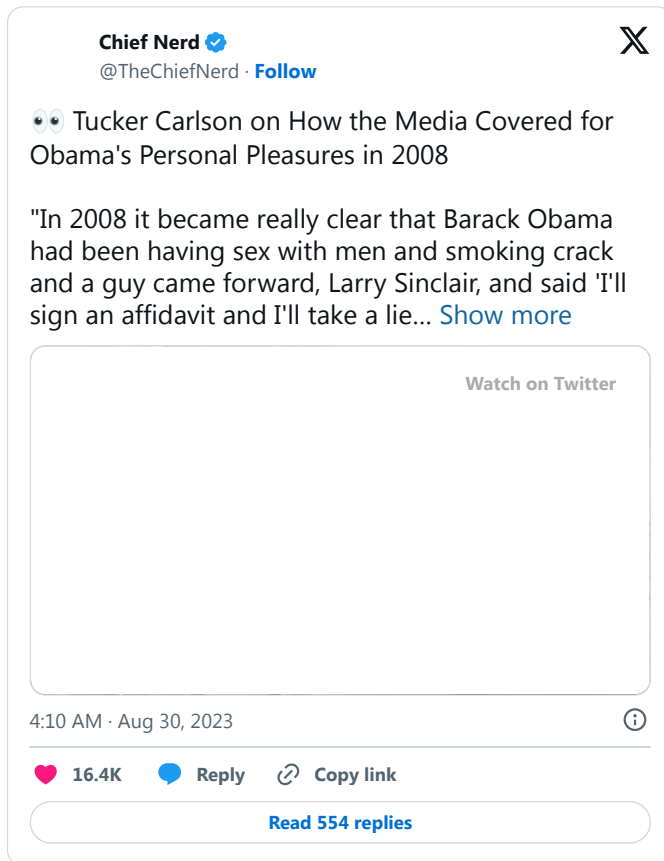
Trump himself had bitterly challenged that stolen election and as a consequence is facing some 90 felony counts in state and federal court that would put him away for 500 years. Yet on Friday the latest poll revealed[18] that these charges had caused his Republican Presidential support to grow even stronger, now rising to 59% and putting him 46 points ahead of his nearest Republican primary rival.



That same poll also placed him dead-even with President Biden, thus giving him an excellent chance of winning the November 2024 vote, whether or not he happens to be campaigning from a prison cell, an utterly bizarre situation that I had discussed at some length:

- American Pravda: Donald Trump, Eugene Debs, and AMLO[19]
The American Political System as Laughingstock or Trainwreck
Ron Unz • **The Unz Review** • August 7, 2023 • 4,900 Words

By a wide margin, Tucker Carlson is the most popular media figure for Republicans and conservatives, and his Trump interview on Twitter attracted some 15 million video views[20], an audience far larger than the one that had watched the Republican Presidential debate held around the same time. A few days ago Carlson said that he expected Trump’s political enemies will finally conclude that orchestrating his assassination is their best chance of preventing his triumphant return to the White House[21]. In that same interview, Carlson casually mentioned that in 2008 it had become widely known in Washington media circles that Presidential Candidate Barack Obama had been having sex with men and smoking crack, but that no journalist, whether Democrat or Republican, was willing to report those astonishing facts to the oblivious American electorate.



Obama's Republican opponent in that bitter campaign had been Sen. John McCain, and perhaps we can now better understand why the Democrats were so unwilling to make use of the shocking evidence regarding the latter's own very sordid Vietnam War record:

- [John McCain: When "Tokyo Rose" Ran for President\[22\]](#)
Ron Unz • ***The Unz Review*** • March 9, 2015 • 4,200 Words

Last month I had closed my article on Trump's criminal prosecutions with the following appraisal of the collapsing legitimacy of America's political system:

As Adam Smith once observed, "There is a great deal of ruin in a nation," but our own country may be rapidly approaching its limit. Nearly 70% of Republicans believe[23] that Donald Trump actually won the 2020 election and only voting fraud put Joseph Biden in the White House, but Trump now faces a lengthy prison sentence for taking that same position.

As a recent *New York Times* article emphasized[24], the notion of a jailed former President running for the White House is an absolutely extraordinary event and our country would be entering "uncharted territory." But there is also a very real possibility that Trump would win and none of the legal experts consulted by the *Times* had any idea of what that would entail: "No one knows."

America's political system is facing an enormous crisis of legitimacy, perhaps just as serious and potentially fatal as the one that brought down the old USSR in the early 1990s.

Our horrendous budget and trade deficits seem permanent but clearly unsustainable, we recently suffered the highest inflation in four decades, and three years ago we experienced the worst urban rioting since the 1960s, as well as the largest spike in the national homicide rate since record-keeping began. We have spent the last eighteen months fighting a losing proxy-war against nuclear-armed Russia on Russia's own border, astonishingly reckless behavior that would have been unimaginable at the height of the old Cold War. The Covid epidemic took more than a million American lives and last year I argued that the calamity was closely analogous to the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster that played such a major role in the collapse of the Soviet Union a few years later.

- [A Thousand Times Greater Than the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster](#)[25]

Ron Unz • ***The Unz Review*** • July 11, 2022 • 2,300 Words

These historical echoes between our own political decline and that of our vanished superpower rival of the Cold War are obviously disturbing. But there are also other important differences, and some of these are not necessarily to the advantage of our own situation.

The USSR of the late Soviet era was a sleepy place, whose cautious and conservative leaders were content to tread water even as their mighty empire gradually rusted away. I despised it at the time and certainly hoped and expected that it would eventually collapse, but I never feared its elderly leaders might provoke a world war in their dotage.

In sharp contrast, the exceptionally reckless and aggressive Neocons have gained complete mastery over the political and media levers that control both our political parties, and therefore they easily pull the strings of the elected officials who nominally govern us. Their years of determined NATO pressure against Russia have already provoked the bloody Ukraine war, the most devastating European conflict in more than three generations, while they have launched an assault on China that is now only just barely short of becoming military.

Earlier this year, Graham Allison, founding dean of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, closed [his important article](#)[26] in *Foreign Policy* by explaining how our relentless provocations had created a China-Russia alliance that now probably outweighed our own:

An elementary proposition in international relations 101 states: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." By confronting both China and Russia simultaneously, the United States has helped create what former U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski called an "alliance of the aggrieved." This has allowed Xi to reverse Washington's successful "trilateral diplomacy" of the 1970s that widened the gap between China and the United States' primary enemy, the Soviet Union, in ways that contributed significantly to the U.S. victory in the Cold War. Today, China and Russia are, in [Xi's words](#)[27], closer than allies.

Since Xi and Putin are not just the current presidents of their two nations but leaders whose tenures effectively have no expiration dates, the United States will have to

understand that it is confronting the most consequential undeclared alliance in the world.

The disappearance of the Soviet Union over thirty years ago had left America as the sole global superpower. In the wake of that triumph, a generation of our political leadership class came of age who regarded worldwide American hegemony as natural and permanent, but their extremely aggressive behavior, particularly their unrelenting hostility towards Russia and China may now be on the verge of finally ending that era.

Living their entire lives in a media propaganda-bubble, these arrogant individuals may not realize the scale of the potential forces confronting them. As [I noted](#)[28] several months ago, China's real productive economy is already three times larger than America's and even exceeds the combined total for the U.S., the European Union, and Japan. Meanwhile, China's naturally-complementary partner Russia constitutes the world's greatest storehouse of energy supplies and other natural resources, as well as a military production capability now apparently larger than that America together with its European vassals.

- [Playing a Game of "Fool's Mate" on the Grand Eurasian Chessboard](#)[29]

Ron Unz • ***The Unz Review*** • April 3, 2023 • 3,000 Words

A central element of this new global coalition against American hegemony has been the rising BRICS alliance, promoted by China and Russia, which also incorporated India, Brazil, and South Africa. Last week, BRICS took a giant step forward by adding six new members: Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Argentina, with the prospects of many additional countries joining in future stages. This implicitly anti-Western bloc now already controls roughly half the world's energy supplies and population and possesses a total GDP considerably larger than that of the American-led G7.

With the rise of the BRICS, we may be witnessing a geopolitical shift as momentous as the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact alliance and the collapse of the Soviet regime that created it.

Although our lick-spittle mainstream media has under-emphasized or even ignored these tectonic developments, astute individuals have recognized which way the wind is blowing. For decades, Roger Cohen has been one of the most distinguished *New York Times* journalists based in Europe, and last Monday he published [a front-page story](#)[30] describing the surprising shift towards Russia of many of the Continent's top political figures, opening with these paragraphs:

PARIS — Nicolas Sarkozy, the former French president, was once known as "Sarko the American" for his love of free markets, freewheeling debate and Elvis. Of late, however, he has appeared more like "Sarko the Russian," even as President Vladimir V. Putin's ruthlessness appears more evident than ever.

In interviews coinciding with the publication of a memoir, Mr. Sarkozy, who was president from 2007 to 2012, said that reversing Russia's annexation of Crimea was "illusory," ruled out Ukraine joining the European Union or NATO because it must remain "neutral," and insisted that Russia and France "need each other."

“People tell me Vladimir Putin isn’t the same man that I met. I don’t find that convincing. I’ve had tens of conversations with him. He is not irrational,” he told Le Figaro[31].
 “European interests aren’t aligned with American interests this time,” he added.

His statements, to the newspaper as well as the TF1 television network, were unusual for a former president in that they are profoundly at odds with official French policy. They provoked outrage from the Ukrainian ambassador to France and condemnation from several French politicians, including President Emmanuel Macron.

That very same day, a different front-page story[32] in the *Wall Street Journal* focused on the terrible economic situation of Germany, Europe’s leading industrial power. Among the most important factors in that country’s predicament was the loss of cheap Russian energy and the decline of exports to China, both consequences of Germany’s total subservience to American foreign policy. Although the current government leadership and all the traditional parties still remain in Washington’s close political orbit, Alternative for Germany[33], a new populist party taking a very different position, has recently surged in the polls, now exceeding 20% support[34] and reaching second place, prompting some outrageously anti-democratic talk of legally banning it[35].

The Nord Stream energy pipelines had represented some of Europe’s most important civilian infrastructure, and the explosions that destroyed them have been responsible for much of Germany’s suffering. Earlier this year, renowned investigative journalist Seymour Hersh revealed that the attacks had been carried out by an American military sabotage team under orders from President Biden, an outright act of war against NATO’s most important European member. So far the German media has successfully concealed this information from its country’s electorate, but when and if the populace eventually discovers the truth, NATO may disintegrate.

- Seymour Hersh: Standing Tall in a Sea of Lies[36]
 Ron Unz • **The Unz Review** • February 13, 2023 • 2,000 Words

Our economic and military confrontations with China and Russia have been disastrously wrong-headed, and this recognition has brought together leading figures from all across the ideological spectrum. Just over a week ago, Prof. Jeffrey Sachs[37], a renowned world economist and a moderate liberal, gave an interview in which he discussed the historic rise of the BRICS alliance in opposition to arrogant American world hegemony.

Around the same time, Prof. Michael Hudson[38], an influential Left economist, provided his somewhat similar overview of the BRICS expansion.

Then at the end of last week, Ray McGovern[39], a former high-ranking CIA official and political moderate, gave his perspective on America’s losing proxy-war in Ukraine:

Col. Douglas Macgregor[40], a very distinguished military expert and strong right-winger, had similar views on Ukraine.

These different individuals, all of them highly credentialed and reputable, span a very wide range of ideological positions, and other figures of similar stature, such as John Mearsheimer[41] and Seymour Hersh[42], have been equally scathing in their criticism of our government's policies.

A couple of decades ago, many of these same figures had demonstrated their courage, integrity, and knowledge by being among the foremost critics of our calamitous Iraq War, which cost our country trillions of dollars and led to the destruction of much of the Middle East. In 2005, my old friend Bill Odom, the three-star general who ran the NSA for Ronald Reagan, had famously described our Iraq invasion as "the greatest strategic disaster in U.S. history." Now once again, our true national interests are being served by a very broad ideological coalition of the non-crazy.

We can only hope that their efforts help ensure that the looming collapse of our doomed American Empire involves as little bloodshed as did the disintegration of the equally doomed Soviet Empire more than a generation ago.

Related Reading:

- American Pravda: Donald Trump, Eugene Debs, and AMLO[19]
- Playing "Fool's Mate" on the Grand Eurasian Chessboard[43]
- Seymour Hersh: Standing Tall in a Sea of Lies[36]
- Did the Neocons Save the World from the Thucydides Trap?[44]
- Russia, China, Iran... and Saudi Arabia?[45]
- Assassinating Vladimir Putin?[46]

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